

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, January 26, 1795. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON. MAD. MSS.

Philada, Jany 26, 95.

Dear Sir, —I have received your favor of Decr 28, but till three weeks after the date of it. It was my purpose to have answered it particularly, but I have been robbed of the time reserved for the purpose. I must of consequence limit myself to a few lines and to my promise given to the Fresco Painter to forward you the enclosed letter. Nothing since my last from Jay or Monroe. The Newspapers as usual teem with French victories and rumors of peace. There seem to be very probable indications of a progress made to this event, except in relation to G. B. with whom a Duet Campaign is the cry of France. The Naturalization has not yet got back from the Senate.¹ I understand however it will suffer no material change. They have the prudence not to touch the nobility clause. The House of Reps are on the Military estabt & the public debt. The difficulty & difference of opinion as to the former produced a motion to request the P. to cause an estimate of the proper defence &c. It was in its real meaning, saying we do not know how many troops ought to be provided by our legislative duty, and ask your direction. It was opposed as opening the way for dragging in the weight of the Ex. for one scale on all party questions—as extorting his opinion which he shd reserve for his negative, and as exposing his unpopular opinions to be extorted at

¹ This was the second naturalization law, approved January 29, 1795, which introduced the five years' residence previous to naturalization and the declaration of intention three

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years before. It required also that good character and attachment to the Constitution be established, and that any title of nobility the applicant might bear must be renounced. This act was really the parent of our naturalization system, and its chief author was Madison. The debate extended from December 22, 1794, to January 8, 1795, Madison making several short speeches. In the course of the debate (January 1) on the clause requiring renunciation of titles, Dexter of Massachusetts opposed it, and ridiculed certain tenets of the Catholic religion, declaring that priestcraft had done more harm than aristocracy. Madison replied:

“ . . . He did not approve the ridicule attempted to be thrown out on the Roman Catholics. In their religion there was nothing inconsistent with the purest Republicanism. In Switzerland about one-half of the Cantons were of the Roman Catholic persuasion. Some of the most Democratical Cantons were so; Cantons where every man gave his vote for a Representative. Americans had no right to ridicule Catholics. They had, many of them, proved good citizens during the Revolution. As to hereditary titles, they were proscribed by the Constitution. He would not wish to have a citizen who refused such an oath.”— *Annals*, 3d Cong., 1035.

any time by an unfriendly majority. The prerogative men chose to take the subject by the wrong handle, and being joined by the weak men, the resolution passed. I fancy the Cabinet are embarrassed on the subject. On the subject of the Debt, the Treasury faction is spouting on the policy of paying it off as a great evil, and laying hold of two or three little excises past last session under the pretext of war, of claiming more merit for their zeal than they allow to the opponents of their (pecuniary) resources. Hamilton has made a long Valedictory Rept on the subject. It is not yet printed, & I have not read it. It is said to contain a number of improper things. He got it in by informing the Speaker he had one ready, predicated on the actual revenues, for the House, when they shd please to receive. Berdinot the ready agent for sycophantic jobs, had a motion cut & dry just at the moment of the adjournment, for informing him in the language applied to the P. on such occasions, that the House was ready to receive the Rept when he pleased, which passed

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without opposition & almost without notice. H gives out that he is going to N. Y. and does not mean to return into public life at all.—N. Jersey has changed all her members except Dayton, whose zeal agst G. B. saved him. There are not more than 2 or 3 who are really on all points Repubns. Dexter is under another sweat in his district, and it is said to be perfectly uncertain whether he or his Rival competitor will succeed.

Adieu Yrs.